

WDFW responses to public comments received during public review of the final *Washington State Status Report for the Tufted Puffin* conducted under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) from January 9-23, 2015. The comments presented here are summaries of the remarks provided by one or more people.

Comment	WDFW Response
1. I support the listing of Tufted Puffins as state endangered in Washington for the reasons provided in the status report.	WDFW is recommending that Tufted Puffins be added to the state endangered species list because of substantial scientific evidence indicating that the species has experienced a major decline in abundance in Washington since about the 1970s. Tufted Puffin sightings declined by 13.9% per year in pelagic surveys off Westport, Washington, between 1983 and 2001, and 8.9% per year in offshore surveys along the outer Washington coast from Cape Flattery to Point Grenville from 2001 to 2012. Colony visits from 2007 to 2010 noted widespread abandonment and an apparent order of magnitude population decline since the last summary assessment from 1978-1984. Overall, 57% of the 44 historically documented puffin breeding sites in Washington are no longer active. Maximum estimates once ranked nine colonies at 1,000 or more individuals, with two reaching 10,000 or more birds, but none of the 19 remaining breeding sites now contains more than a few hundred birds. In combination, of the 44 once-documented breeding sites, 39 have either been abandoned or experienced an order of magnitude decline. Puffins in Washington's inner marine waters are at particular risk, with only two active breeding sites now remaining, both in the eastern Strait of Juan de Fuca, that together contain a total population of a few dozen individuals. None of the 11 historically known breeding colonies remain in the San Juan Islands.
2. I oppose the listing of Tufted Puffins as state endangered in Washington.	Comment noted. By law (WAC 232-12-297), species listings and delistings by the state must be based solely on the biological status of the species and its continued existence in the state.
3. We need to take actions to not lose Tufted Puffins in Washington.	If the Washington Fish and Wildlife Commission classifies Tufted Puffins as a state endangered species, WDFW will prepare a recovery plan for the species as required in WAC 232-12-297, Section 11.1, which will describe different actions that can be taken to recover puffins in Washington. These activities may include, for example, expanded research on the species to determine the cause(s) of its decline (such as determination of diet); expanded monitoring of prey fish trends; eradication of European rabbits from Destruction Island, where puffins nest; management of invasive plants on nesting islands; and continued planning to avoid oil spills in Washington's marine waters.
4. The Washington State Department of Natural Resources hopes to collaborate with WDFW in developing management actions for puffins on its aquatic reserves and other aquatic lands in the state.	WDFW appreciates this offer for collaboration and looks forward to working with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources on puffin recovery planning and conservation implementation in the future.

Comment	WDFW Response
<p>5. The puffin report's conclusions and recommendation are completely unwarranted and unsupported by the data available and presented. The puffin report fails to adequately make a case for listing Tufted Puffins as endangered in Washington. I want to see good, documentable, applicable, verifiable, and real science that supports legitimate, not pre-determined and ideological conclusions.</p>	<p>WDFW disagrees with this comment and believes the Washington State Status Report for the Tufted Puffin was prepared using the best available scientific information on the species. Draft versions of the report were reviewed by scientists and knowledgeable staff within WDFW and numerous scientists and species experts outside of the agency. The final status report reflects their suggested edits. None of these reviewers questioned the report's conclusions and recommendations, or its use of the science.</p>
<p>6. Please prevent human disturbance at all remaining nesting sites for Tufted Puffins that are under WDFW's jurisdiction.</p>	<p>Nearly all current and former puffin breeding sites in Washington are managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as parts of their national wildlife refuges. These islands are visited only occasionally by scientists and land managers, and are off-limits to the general public. However, some former nesting sites in the San Juan Islands may be subject to unlawful visitation by kayakers and boaters. If WDFW prepares a recovery plan for puffins (see response to Comment 3), an action would likely be included to work with the USFWS to minimize this type of visitation.</p>